

POLL: Same-sex issue not top voter concern

FROM PAGE 1

ministry based in Colorado Springs, said the election was a mandate to get rid of the benefits.

Pollster Craig Hughes said the survey showed same-sex benefits, approved just five months before the election, were on voters' minds.

Survey respondents ranked it behind growth and taxes as the top election issue, but 69 percent of those who said it was a major factor in their votes opposed the benefits.

Hughes said that with only 15 percent of respondents calling it their single most important issue, the desire to eliminate the benefits fell short of a mandate.

"There were a lot of things to debate in this race, and the health care benefits definitely got people out," Hughes said.

Council members are slated to vote Tuesday on the plan to extend benefits to employees' household members — same-sex partners, unmarried heterosexual partners, parents younger than 65 and adult children. The proposal calls for employees to pay 100 percent of the insurance premiums.

Asked whether they would support extending the benefits to a "child, partner or parent," 71 percent of respondents said they would. That included a majority of people who said they favored revoking benefits in April.

Hughes said the result could show willingness to accept the plan because other household members are included or because it doesn't cost taxpayers.

"What you're seeing is Colorado Springs voters, from the election, saying, 'Don't dis-

criminate against gays and lesbians, but don't put them up on a pedestal either,'" he said.

Howevewr, Peter Brandt, Focus' issues response director, said the question was skewed because of its use of the word "partner." It was the first survey question about benefits that didn't use the terms "gay and lesbian" or "same-sex."

"We can do all the surveying we'd like to, but the only survey that matters was the one that took place on Election Day," Brandt said.

So what did the survey say about Election Day?

Most supporters of the candidates who won, except same-sex benefits backer Richard Skorman, responded that they preferred revocation.

Levels of support varied. Only 9 percent of Mayor Lionel Rivera's backers hoped to keep benefits in place, while 21 percent of those voting for District 3 Councilman Jerry Heimlicher wanted that.

Vice Mayor Skorman, who hosted a presentation about the poll results in his office Friday, argued the survey shows Colorado Springs voters are "fair-minded."

"It reaffirms a live-and-let-live value system," Skorman said. "People are uneasy about too much government in Colorado Springs but also are looking for government to not intrude in their lives."

CONTACT THE WRITER: 636-0184 or sealover@gazette.com

Saturday, February 7, 2004

Other voice

Cut in COPS fund will return local

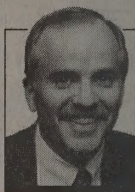
President Bush, who has served three years without vetoing a spending bill, has never wasted any political capital trying to reduce the size of the federal government. But his new budget offers one conspicuous display of political courage: proposing a drastic cut in the program that helps pay for local police.

Community Oriented Policing Services was the official name of President Bill Clinton's celebrated effort to put 100,000 cops on the street. It was a politically savvy scheme to enlist Democrats firmly on the side of law enforcement, and it also appeared to have a dramatic, positive impact. Vice President Al Gore, noting the drop in crime in the years after COPS was enacted, claimed that all those new officers made the country "safer than it has been in decades."

Republicans, who pride themselves on being merciless toward criminals, don't usually pass up a chance to show support for our men in blue. So you'd think Bush would protect himself by going along, or even upping the ante. The symbolism looms large, and in a \$2.4 trillion budget, the amount of money looks tiny.

But this is one case where he's rejected the easy option in favor of the hardheaded one. Under Clinton, annual outlays rose as high as \$1.4 billion a year. But for the coming year, Bush has proposed to allocate just \$97 million.

He's done that despite the risk of withering campaign rhetoric. Even before the budget came out, John Kerry charged that Bush has "shortchanged" the program and de-



OPINION

**STEPHEN
CHAPMAN**

Chicago Tribune
columnist

For the
meet its g
additional
money to
buy techn
partment
from desl
beefing u
tionwide
David Mu
the Herit
ington, sa
ing the
57,000.

Nor do
all the credit for th
has been rising fe
would have conti
even without fed
difference is they
as they had been
and local funds.

What the prog
success is spend
signed to gratify e
Over the last dec
\$10.6 billion to so
law enforcement b
four U.S. territori
tempt to direct cr
the places with th
spread the cash to
needy. That gives
tives the chance to
fighting dollars the

The program of
ries of new officer
idea was that once
valuable the ad
they'd want to ke
pense. In fact, CO
down in 2001, havi

But some com
extra cops are w
City used COPS m
ficers, reports US
in the last three y

understands the
leap to sug-
mean a rise in
that cops

City conflicted about benefits, survey finds

By **ED SEALOVER**
THE GAZETTE

Colorado Springs voters dislike benefits for same-sex partners but support a new plan extending benefits to them and other household members, according to a poll released Friday.

Supporters and opponents of the proposal said the survey results support their position, and a leading conservative organization questioned whether the support for the benefits package is misleading.

The poll, conducted in early December by Denver firm Ridder/Braden Inc., was commissioned by Citizens Project, a liberal-leaning organization that favors same-sex benefits. Its margin of error is 5.7 percent.

Most of the questions concerned how important the issue of same-sex benefits was in April's municipal election. A conservative slate of candidates was swept into office and quickly revoked the benefits law.

Focus on the Family, a national conservative Christian

SEE POLL • PAGE 6

VIEWPOINTS

A sampling of questions from the Citizens Project survey:

1) What issue had the most effect on your vote for City Council in April?

- Growth - 27 percent
- Taxes - 24 percent
- Same-sex benefits - 15 percent
- Traffic - 14 percent
- Size and role of city government - 11 percent
- Economy - 9 percent
- Don't know - 1 percent

2) When you cast your vote, were you supportive of maintaining health benefits or did you favor revoking them?

- Revoke benefits - 43 percent
- Not a major factor in vote - 36 percent
- Maintain benefits - 20 percent

3) Would you support or oppose a policy allowing a city employee to include a child, partner or parent in their health benefits if the employee paid the entire premium?

- Support - 71 percent
- Oppose - 20 percent
- Don't know - 9 percent

SOURCE: Ridder/Braden Inc.

CORRECTIONS | CLARIFICATIONS

The Gazette corrects errors of fact in this space. If you find mistakes, please call 636-0266 during business hours.

#38, hundreds, if not thousands,
of students have benefited from
her warm heart and expertise as



Funeral and Cremation Care of Colorado

Direct Cremation from
\$645.00

Please provide me with information on
low cost cremation and funeral services.

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Funeral and Cremation Care of Colorado
930 South Hancock • Colorado Springs, CO 80903
719-473-0745

Three Locations to Serve You
4th Generation Family Owned
Colorado Springs • Florence • Pueblo West

Deaths Services and Life Tributes

To Our Readers:

Deaths and Services listings are provided by The Gazette News Division at no charge seven days per week as a public service in cooperation with area funeral homes.

More detailed obituaries or life tributes are placed through the Advertising Division. The length and content of life tributes are at the discretion of the family of the deceased although all will be published in a standard print format.

The deadline for next day publication of a life tribute is noon Monday through Saturday. The Advertising Division is closed Sundays and holidays. E-mail to obits@gazette.com, fax to 719-636-0122 or deliver to our offices at 30 S. Prospect St. A life tribute normally is submitted for the family by a funeral home. If submitted directly by the family, photo identification, contact information and prepayment are required. Call 719-636-0101 for more information.

Rates are based on a minimum of 50 words as follows: up to 99 words, \$0.70 per word; 100-199 words, \$0.66 per word; and more than 200 words, \$0.62 per word. There is a \$10 charge to include a photograph.